1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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points — or oblique designations — makes clear the distinction between the two, for the *bocor* invariably and certain *hungans* on occasion are called *nèg' mezi mazo*, "Negro who wears his back to the front," or, again, those who "serve with both hands." Though by no means shunning the services of the practitioner, the Haitians of Mirebalais nevertheless look upon the working of magic with a cynicism that is reflected in the gossip about happenings that befall all who practice it, in any form, and particularly those who work evil magic. It is said: "The *hungan* often dies an evil death, and the *bocor* who makes *wanga* almost always. These people kill each other by magic"; or one hears of a woman who one day went to the cemetery to obtain materials needed for her unsavory work and was struck and killed by the thunderbolts which are believed to smite sorcerers.

To keep his reputation, a practitioner of magic, good or evil, must make continual demonstration of his powers. For example, in prescribing a magical cure, it is incumbent upon the *hungan* or *mambu* to foresee all eventualities, even where the directions are not followed, a prescription which is regarded as a strong check on the charlatan and is the reason why a practitioner is prudent in refusing to accept a case beyond his power to aid, since persistent failure to achieve cures will lose a *hungan* his reputation and his practice. Naturally, certain practitioners do not fail on occasion to turn the anxiety of a family over a serious illness to their own account, but inasmuch as the cures made by a man are the most adequate proof of his power, the feeling is that his clients have an unquestioned safeguard against chicanery. This point of view, it may be noted, is of undoubted importance in perpetuating a living faith in magic.

An example of how rapidly a practitioner of magic can lose prestige when some mishap occurs to him was encountered when an important *gangan* of the valley was brought into court charged with the theft of a pig which he claimed was

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Miscellaneous

given him by a third party for whom he had done what was euphemistically called "a piece of work." The evidence clearly showed that the animal, which he had killed to feed a *combite*, had been stolen, and since this *gangan* could not establish his defense that he was an innocent receiver of stolen goods, he was convicted and sentenced to three months in prison, and to pay the owner of the pig the exorbitant sum — sixty-five gourdes — asked as damages. Sympathy was very generally with the *gangan*, but the opinion most often heard expressed was that his power had obviously been lessened by his misuse of the *connaissance* the gods had given him, or they would not have permitted even his arrest, much less his conviction. To reinforce the point, specific reference was repeatedly made to the *houngan* most popular in the valley at the time, about whom it was said that, for example, were he accused before a court, the officers might even enter his house in search of him while he was present, but they would still be unable to see that he was before them.

Other attitudes held toward workers of magic developed in connection with this case. The popular *houngan* was often called on, it was said, because his work was well done and his fees were not too high; it was pointed out that there were renowned *vodou* priests who charged five hundred gourdes for a *service* which this man directed effectively for but little over one hundred; moreover, such men often failed to remove the evil deities which were troubling the family that employed them, but would instead add more, so that their clients would soon have need of them again. Practices such as these, especially that of overcharging, are frowned upon by the *loa*, and if persisted in they "spoil" the power of the priest. This was one of the reasons why, in the opinion of many individuals, the *gangan* in question had been convicted. "He was once a remarkable *gangan*, but he has spoiled his *loa* by using them for evil, and by asking too much money for what he was employed

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land, whose bodies are buried in it, and whose spirits watch over it. As has been shown in the discussion of property, land in Haiti is owned privately, and, once title has passed, is subject to no alienation, except at the will of the owner—an attitude also held toward property of other categories, as is evidenced by the fact that most of the possessions of a man, particularly his livestock, are marked for identification, and theft is severely punished. Even the disposal of stray animals whose owners cannot be identified must follow well-defined legal procedure, in accordance with which they are held by the officers of the commune for a stated period of time before being sold at public auction. All marks on these animals are carefully noted in the records, so that title to them may be duly established.

In the organization of production and distribution an African mold, if not full consent, predominates. The co-operative work-system, which is so important in maintaining agricultural production, is directly related to comparable groupings of West Africa, of which a distinctive form is the *dokpwe* of Dahomey, described when the African origins of Haitian culture were examined. The *combite*, as an instrument of co-operative labor and mutual self-help, with its tradition of giving no pecuniary reward for work done, but of making the feast which comes at the end of the day's labor adequate return—all these represent pure retentions of African practice. Even more striking is the carry-over in the attitudes which go with these outer forms—the manner in which the participants look forward with pleasant anticipation to taking part in *combites*, the enjoyment which they derive from their group work, and the verve with which the work is done are clear expressions of these attitudes. The role of the *combite*-song in exercising social control and enforcing conformity to local custom is entirely African, as is its function in stimulating work by setting a rhythm for it.

African, too, is the institution of the market, though in this

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house. A round, polished Indian stone is occasionally used as a *garde baliorion*. And old people speak of a very powerful charm known as a *gros arrête* which in former times was placed on the trail to protect entire villages or valleys.

Still another potent defensive charm is the *possin*, which is the product of ritual magic within the cult temple. A possin may be an actual bundle containing a formula of special ingredients; more often, it is invisible, consisting of magical forces unleashed into space by the houngan. There are many ceremonies in the hounfor devoted to the projecting of these magical forces. They are called *cérémonie possin* or *cérémonie magie* and are dramatized by special cult songs and dances. Sometimes the magic ceremony is woven into a more generalized cult ritual. The powers of the possin are regarded as wider and more potent than those of the arrête. Possins are said to protect an individual or a group not only against other magic but also against natural phenomena and accident. A possin may ward off lightning, for example, or protect one from falling trees or from shipwreck or drowning. But it is not solely defensive magic. It may bring success in fishing, or produce a good crop in one's garden, or aid human fertility.

Since the crops and the garden are the substance of life, much attention is given to their protection. An enemy may attack a man or his household through garden magic. He may bury a ouanga in the earth, to bring sickness or ruin. He may poison a tree by performing a special rite at its foot, and its fruits will then carry disease or death to the one who eats them. Or he may make a compact with the earth so that it will dry up and refuse to produce for the one who tills it. Against all these malevolent possibilities, as well as against common thieves, the Haitian peasant has many magical and practical resources. Some people are said to employ zombies as watchmen. These fearsome creatures will capture a trespasser and hold him for the owner of the field.[3] Or perhaps the owner will place special arrêtes in his garden. Occasionally a man will protect his fields by planting *piquettes* in the earth. The *piquette* is a piece of sharpened bamboo or hard wood. Its point is dipped into poison, and it is placed in the ground, sharpened end up. An unwary intruder who steps on a piquette may die of his wound.

To counteract the *malfet*, or evil eye, a man may procure from a houn a special shirt made of wide stripes of red, white, and blue cloth sewed together. This shirt, called a *mayo* or *mayet*, is worn for seven days if the *malfet* is a rather ordinary one. If the evil force is a particularly virulent one, however, the mayo will be worn as long as twenty-one

[3] [Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy" Journal of Negro History, October, 1940, p. 503. Cf. p. 39, Category 116. -- Analyst]